New Commercial Radio Content Production Standards

January 2012
Introduction

The commercial radio industry implemented three new content production standards from 1 July 2011 as follows:

A. **Audio Content Standards** – **MANDATORY** for all audio content produced for commercial radio stations, whether analogue or digital, by radio stations, production houses and creative agencies – **no more MP3 accepted from 1 July 2011**

B. **Image and Text Standards** - apply to all stations being broadcast using digital radio technology in Australia

C. **Piñata Specification** – **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**
A. Audio Content Standard

From 1st July 2011 all content submitted to radio stations must comply with the following:-

A. Mandatory
   – 48 KHz, 16 bit, linear uncompressed audio.
   – Duration must be within 1% of nominal duration.

B. Recommended
   – Audio content should have EBU BWF header.
   – Audio content should be contained in a Pinata.

Any audio content received that is NOT in the mandatory format will be returned immediately to the sender to enable conversion to the mandatory format and resubmission.
Previous practice has involved audio being sent to radio stations in a number of different formats and often as MP3 files. These files were variable in quality – some were good, while others were very poor. A major problem for the industry has been that MP3 sourced material can be degraded further in distribution and digital transmission. The goal of the mandatory audio standard is to ensure improved sound quality on all commercial radio stations – analogue and digital.
B. Image (Slideshow) Standard

Mandatory

- Images to be landscape 320 by 240 pixels.
- Images must be JPEG, PNG or Animated PNG. (No GIFs or Animated GIFS)
- Animated PNG files must be no more than 10 frames per second.
- Images intended to be synchronised to an audio advert must be less than 23 Kilobytes in size.

Recommended

- Slides should be contained in a Piñata file.
- JPEG slides may be tagged using EXIF.
Digital Radio allows for the transmission of images (“slides”) and text as well as audio.

Slides can be synchronised with advertising audio, or transmitted during other programme segments.

Images and text must conform to content standards.

It is also strongly recommended that this content is packaged in a Piñata file.
Not every receiver will display slides – so ads should function as “stand alone” audio – which may be complemented by the addition of a slide or image.

Very sharp images with small file sizes can be obtained by using PNG format – with a design based on solid blocks of colour and a restricted colour palette. (eg 16 colours)

Graphic designers should design their content on a 320 by 240 pixel template for best results; rather than work on larger images and allow automatic compression tools to resize before broadcast.
B(2). DLS Text Standard

- Text transmitted within a digital radio service is known as DLS (Dynamic Label Segment).

- **DLS Text messages must be 128 characters or less.**

- The size and font cannot be specified – these are determined by the receiver.

- Text cannot be closely synchronised with audio on the majority of digital radio receivers.

- It is recommended that DLS text is contained within a Piñata file.
C. Piñata Standard

- Piñata is a file format developed by the Commercial Content Standards Group (CCSG) - a committee formed by Commercial Radio Australia.

- The file format contains high quality audio, text, images and associated metadata in a single file with a unique key number.

- The file format is non proprietary – the specification is freely available from Commercial Radio Australia wilson.ng@commercialradio.com.au
Contents of Piñata File

Copy of script

Audio

Audit file

Text

Slideshow Images
Aims of Piñata Standard

- To allow the various elements of multimedia adverts to be packaged into a single container.

- To allow automated checking that all the individual elements conform to the Commercial Content Standard specifications.

- To allow automated processing of multimedia adverts within the playout system.
Creating Piñata Files.

- Piñata files are created using Piñata production tools compliant with the Piñata Standard.

- Any organisation can develop its own Piñata production tool by referring to the standards freely available from Commercial Radio Australia.

- Piñata production services are provided by digital courier companies, digital courier companies have already developed Piñata production tools which can be obtained from these companies – details provided at the end of this presentation.

- A stand alone Piñata application is also available.
Companies involved in the development of the Piñata Standard and which also have developed and supply a Piñata production and/or distribution service are as follows:

• **Digital Courier** - Piñata production and distribution service - [info@digitalcourier.com.au](mailto:info@digitalcourier.com.au)

• **Audionet** - Piñata production and distribution service - [dcox@audionet.com.au](mailto:dcox@audionet.com.au)

• **All in Media (AIM)** – Piñata Production application currently free to radio broadcasters and for sale to production houses – [jason.malaure@thisisaim.com](mailto:jason.malaure@thisisaim.com)